



UMATILLA COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

200 SE Third, Pendleton, Oregon

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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Public health officials urge prevention against ticks as outdoor activity season starts

Pendleton, Ore. -- With the arrival of spring and outdoor activity months, public health officials are reminding people to protect themselves against ticks and the illnesses they can cause.

“While tick-borne illnesses have non-specific symptoms beyond a headache and fever, they can quickly develop into serious illness” said Genni Lehnert, Umatilla County Health Department. “Often, the person may not even know a tick bite is the cause — which is why prevention is so important.”

Most ticks live in outdoor grassy, wooded areas, but they can also be found in backyards in towns and cities, so basic prevention steps are always a good idea said xxx. “Tick-bites can be avoided by taking basic protective measures, both while outdoors and after returning home.”

Umatilla County Health Department offers these basic prevention measures:

- As soon as you return home, check for ticks and remove any you find. Young ticks are about the size of a poppy seed; adult ticks the size of an apple seed. Ask for help in inspecting areas you cannot reach or see.
- Remove the tick promptly with tweezers or fingers. Grasp it as close to the skin surface as possible and pull up with a slow, even pressure. After removal, wash the area thoroughly with soap and water. Home remedies such as matches or petroleum jelly do not remove ticks.
- When outdoors, stay on cleared paths and avoid heavily wooded areas.
- Wear light-colored clothing so you spot ticks crawling on them.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and tuck pant legs into your socks so ticks cannot crawl up your pant legs.
- Apply DEET-containing repellents, making sure to follow manufacturer’s instructions.
- Ask your veterinarian about tick prevention products for dogs and cats —and be sure to check them for ticks, too.
- Remove leaf litter and debris to reduce the likelihood of ticks around the home.

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Lehnert said Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne illness in Oregon, with a total of 123 cases reported between 2002-2006. Lyme disease is transmitted by the deer tick, primarily found east of the Cascades. More than half of people with Lyme disease develop a bulls-eye rash around the bite. Other symptoms include fever, headache, fatigue, malaise and muscle and joint pain. If untreated, serious complications such as meningitis, facial palsy, muscle, joint or heart abnormalities may occur.

Nine cases of a second tick-borne illness, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, were reported between 2002-2006, and all were acquired east of the Cascades. Symptoms include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and muscle aches and pains. A spotted rash usually appears on the body and may be accompanied by joint, abdominal pain and diarrhea. Transmission can occur within 3 to 5 hours after a tick attaches, so prompt removal of the tick is essential.

All tick-borne illnesses can be treated with antibiotics, but a prompt and accurate diagnosis is important, said Lehnert. "If you think you have a tick-borne illness, call your health care provider immediately."

More information about Lyme disease is on the Web at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/index.htm or www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/diseases/diseases.shtml

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